



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Research and
Special Programs
Administration**

The Administrator

400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

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Not. 6809A

MAR 16 1999

The Honorable Jim Hall
Chairman
National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'Enfant Plaza East, S.W.
Washington, DC 20594

Dear Chairman Hall:

This is in response to your October 16, 1998, letter concerning National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) safety recommendation P-98-25 in which the NTSB recommends that the Research and Special Programs Administration (RSPA):

[r]equire pipeline system operators to precisely locate and place permanent markers at sites where their gas and hazardous liquid pipelines cross navigable waterways.

The safety of waterway crossings is an important concern of RSPA and we are actively involved in addressing this issue. This past summer we participated in six regional town meetings which identified stakeholder concerns for the nation's Maritime Transportation System (MTS). These town meetings provided an issue framework for a national conference held last November at which leaders from government and industry developed a national agenda for the MTS. The issue of pipelines crossing navigable channels was specifically mentioned at the public meetings and at the national conference as an area of concern.

Paramount in the recommendation from the regional town meetings and the MTS national conference was the need for an initial, thorough review by concerned federal agencies. We are currently leading a sub-committee of the safety and dredging task groups which we have formed to address your recommendation P-98-25. This committee brings together representatives from the Corps of Engineers, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Coast Guard, and the Maritime Administration to provide appropriate and integrated solutions on the entirety of the issue. We are committed to establishing the best methods to meet each of the safety needs.

We expect to have preliminary recommendations from the interagency committee within two months. Pending the results, we request that NTSB Safety Recommendation P-98-25 be classified as "OPEN--Acceptable Response".

If we can be of further assistance, please contact me or Ms. Patricia Klinger, Acting Director, Office of Policy and Program Support at (202) 366-4831.

Sincerely,



Kelley S. Coyner